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# Message Text

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ACTION SY-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SS-15 OC-06 CCO-00 OCL-00
INR-07 DODE-00 AF-10 /056 W
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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
INFO MSG BATTALION ARLINGTON VA
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
SECSTATE WASHDC 393

UNCLAS ATHENS 4141

FROM WAUCHOPE FOR ESCHENFELDER

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ASEC
SUBJECT: UNIT COMMENDATION FOR MSG DETACHMENT, ASMARA

1. THE EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMANCE OF THE MARINE SECURITY GUARD DETACHMENT ASMARA DURING THE PERIOD OF THE CLOSURE OF THE CONGEN AND WITHDRAWAL OF THE OFFICIAL AMERICAN PRESENCE FROM ASMARA (APRIL 23-29) CLEARLY MERITS THE OFFICIAL RECOGNITION OF THE U.S. MARINE CORPS. THEREFORE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH MCO 1650-20B, I RECOMMEND THAT THE MSG DETACHMENT BE AWARDED THE MERITORIOUS UNIT COMMENDATION. I REQUEST THAT THIS RECOMMENDATION BE FORWARDED THROUGH THE MARINE CORPS CHAIN OF COMMAND TO THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS.

2. UNDER THE COMMAND OF STAFF SERGEANT STEPHEN D. WHITT, NOCIC OF THE MARINE SECURITY GUARD DETACHMENT, ASMARA, THE MEN OF THIS UNIT PLAYED AN INTEGRAL PART IN THE EFFECTIVE AND SUCCESSFUL WITHDRAWAL OF 44 USG PERSONNEL AND 5 DEPENDENTS, AND THE SAFEGUARDING OF VITAL COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT FROM THE EVER-PRESENT THREAT OF COMPROMISE. UPON RECEIPT OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT OF ETHIOPIA ORDERING THE CLOSURE OF THE AMERICAN CONSULATE
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GENERAL WITHIN FOUR DAYS, THE MEN OF THE MSG DETACHMENT WERE CALLED UPON TO PERFORM DUTIES FAR IN EXCESS OF THEIR NORMAL RESPONSIBILITIES.

3. THE MSG'S WERE FIRST REQUIRED TO IMMEDIATELY ENHANCE SECURITY OF THE CONSULATE COMPOUND AS THE MANNER IN WHICH THE HOST GOVERNMENT'S ORDER WAS TO BE EXECUTED WAS NOT INITIALLY KNOWN.

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WHEN AT 1745 APRIL 24 THE OPERATIONAL TRACT OF THE NAVAL
COMMUNICATIONS UNIT AT KAGNEW STATION, WHICH WAS ALSO
SUBJECT TO THE CLOSURE ORDER, WAS SEIZED BY ETHIOPIAN TROOPS
UNDER THE CLEAR THREAT OF FORCE, SAFEGUARDING OF THE CONSULATE'S
EXTREMELY SENSITIVE COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT AND CLASSIFIED
MATERIALS BECAME THE MSG'S PRIMARY MISSION. AS THE THREAT WAS NOW
MANIFEST, ON THE ORDERS OF THE ACTING PRINCIPAL OFFICER, EVERY
MSG PARTICIPATED THROUGHOUT THE NEXT TWO DAYS IN THE EFFICIENT,
THOROUGH AND RAPID DESTRUCTION OF ALL CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS AND
EQUIPMENT. IN THE PROCESS THEY DEVISED NOVEL PROCEDURES TO
BOTH EXPEDITE AND IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVE DESTRUCTION OF THIS EQUIPMENT.

AT THE END OF THE WITHDRAWAL OPERATION, NOT ONE DOCUMENT, NOT ONE
PIECE OF EQUIPMENT COULD BE COMPROMISED.

4. THROUGHOUT THE WITHDRAWAL OPERATION, THE MSG'S WERE REQUIRED
TO CLOSELY CONTROL THE ACCESS OF FOREIGNERS TO THE CONSULATE
COMPOUND AND GUARD AGAINST UNAUTHORIZED INTRUSION. ON THREE
OCCASIONS SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND OFFICERS OF THE
ETHIOPIAN ARMY DEMANDED ACCESS TO THE CONSULATE. ON THE ONE
OCCASION WHEN THE ACTING PRINCIPAL OFFICER WAS NOT PRESENT, THE MSG'S
FIRMLY YET TACTFULLY DENIED FOUR ETHIOPIAN OFFICERS ACCESS.
ON THE OTHER TWO OCCASIONS, WITHOUT SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS,
THEY STATIONED THEMSELVES IN STRATEGIC POSITIONS TO PREVENT THE
POSSIBLE COMPROMISE OF THE REMAINING SENSITIVE COMMUNICATIONS
EQUIPMENT.

5. WHEN A 48-HOUR EXTENSION WAS GRANTED BY THE HOST GOVERNMENT,
THE NCOIC AND THREE MSG'S WHO WERE DESIGNATED TO REMAIN ACCEPTED
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THIS RESPONSIBILITY WITH MATURITY AND PROFESSIONALISM. THE TWO
WHO DEPARTED WERE ENTRUSTED WITH MARINE CORPS EQUIPMENT AND FILES,
AND CONTRIBUTED TO THE SAFE AND EFFICIENT LOADING OF THE TWO MAC
EVACUATION AIRCRAFT. WITH THE REDUCTION OF THE CONSULATE STAFF,
THE REMAINING MSG'S WERE COMPELLED TO ASSUME EVEN GREATER
RESPONSIBILITIES. AT THIS TIME, ATTEMPTS AT PILFERING BECAME
COMMONPLACE. INDIVIDUAL MSG'S WERE REQUIRED TO RECOVER PILFERED
PROPERTY WITHOUT CAUSING CONFRONTATION WITH ETHIOPIAN SECURITY
OFFICIALS OR THE LOCAL POPULACE. THE ATMOSPHERE WAS HEAVY WITH
LATENT HOSTILITY, AND JUDGMENT AND TACT WERE OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE.
LARGELY AS A RESULT OF EXTRAORDINARY EFFORTS OF THE MSG DETACHMENT,
BOTH AS INDIVIDUALS WHO WERE EXHAUSTED AFTER SIX DAYS OF CONTINUOUS
EXERTION, AND AS AN ORGANIZATION WHICH MAINTAINED ITS DISCIPLINE AND
COHESION, THE AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL COMPOUND REMAINED FIRMLY
IN THE CONTROL OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT UNTIL THE VERY LAST MINUTE
OF AMERICAN TENANCY.

6. THE DEDICATION, DISCIPLINE, LOYALTY, JUDGMENT, TACT,
DECISIVENESS AND SELF-SACRIFICE DISPLAYED BY THE NOCIC AND MEN

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OF THE MARINE SECURITY GUARD DETACHMENT, ASMARA, IS IN KEEPING
WITH THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF A MOST DISTINGUISHED ORGANIZATION,
THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS.
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**Review Markings:**
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